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ABSTRACT

The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health created the School of the Future (SoF) project to enable selected Texas schools to coordinate and implement school-based social and health services on their campuses and to demonstrate the effectiveness of this method of service delivery by evaluating the project. This booklet reports on one aspect of the qualitative, or process, evaluation by focusing on the project coordinators, the people who were primarily responsible for how the project developed at each of the four urban sites (Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio). The intent was the same at each site, but the coordinators were expected to bring together an array of programs suitable for the targeted community. The four coordinators, each of whom is profiled, brought a variety of skills and experiences to their work with the SoF, and they approached their tasks differently. By the end of the funding period, however, they had two important things in common. Each stayed with the project for its entire 5 years, something that is rare in programs on grant money, but a fact that served the programs well. The other common denominator was the tremendous esteem in which each of the coordinators was held by the community. Both community members and the coordinators themselves considered interpersonal skills paramount in their success. A number of personal characteristics and administrative skills were cited by community members and coordinators as important, but both groups agreed on the importance of communication skills for the coordinator position. (SLD)

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A Key to the School of the Future

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THE PROJECT COORDINATORS

A Key to the School of the Future

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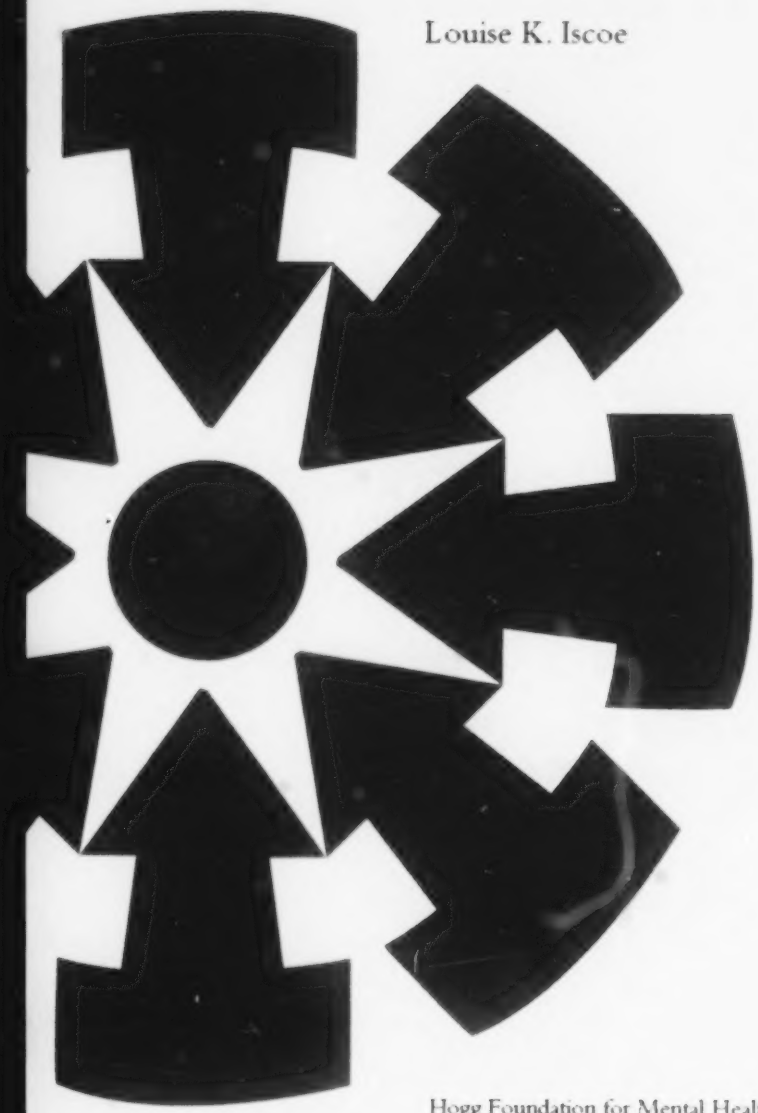

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PREFACE

When the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health created the School of the Future (SoF) project, it had two major goals: (1) to enable selected Texas schools to coordinate and implement school-based social and health services on their campuses and (2) to demonstrate the effectiveness of this method of service delivery by evaluating the project to show both the process used and the outcomes that resulted from these efforts.

The project was funded by the Foundation for five-years, 1990 to 1995. Based on the fact that it has been continued in this sixth year under other funding at each of the four sites—Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio—and that it has been incorporated into the school systems of two of these cities, it would appear that the SoF has been a remarkable success.

As gratifying as this indication of success might be, it is not enough. Too often, social service programs do not provide the documentation to substantiate the need for long-term continuation or replication. Aware of this, when the project began the Foundation provided an equal amount of funding for five years to conduct a two-fold evaluation: quantitative, to verify and confirm the impact of the project on the students, their families, and the schools, and qualitative, to show the process of project development.

Throughout the funding period, researchers used a combination of standardized instruments, surveys, and interviews to gather data on the schools, the students and their families, and the services provided. This year they are devoting their efforts to analyzing and writing up the results of the data accumulated.

This booklet is the first to report on one aspect of the qualitative, or process, evaluation. It focuses on the project coordinators, the persons whose position marks a primary difference in the SoF and other school-based service programs and who primarily have been responsible for how the project developed at each site. There is little doubt as to their impact on the project. Future publications will detail how the project affected the population it was designed to serve.

Wayne H. Holtzman
Special Counsel, Hogg Foundation for Mental Health

INTRODUCTION

The project coordinator is the key to the School of the Future. In a survey of teachers and parents, advisory board members and service providers, those words were expressed time and time again. Other comments were equally strong:

> The coordinator plays a critical role. Without him, the project would crumble; there would be no glue to hold resources and schools together. Principals might try, but they lack the time.
> — *Advisory Board Member*

> I don't think you can exist without a coordinator. You have to have a leader, someone with a check-and-balance system. Who would I go to? You have to have a spokesperson, someone looking for money, writing proposals. We teachers don't have the time. You need an overseer. I think some components might continue but I don't know how effective they would be.
> — *Elementary School Teacher*

> You need one person who focuses on the whole picture, someone able to delegate authority. Without the coordinator, nothing would happen. — *Middle School Teacher*

> I don't believe anything would exist without the coordinator. You need someone to oversee, to make decisions, to see the wholeness of it, to make it work. — *Middle School Counselor*

> I think one of the main reasons the project is successful is because of the coordinator. — *Parent*

What is the School of the Future, and what makes the coordinators so crucial? What is their role? What task and activities do they carry out? What skills and experience do they have? And what have they accomplished, and how have they been able to accomplish so much, in the project's first five years?

THE SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE: AN OVERVIEW

In Summer 1990, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health initiated the School of the Future project (SoF). Not a school in a traditional sense, the SoF project was designed to enhance education by bringing together on public school campuses a variety of health and human services that could better the lives and improve the academic potential of children in need.

School-based services in themselves were not new in 1990. What was new was the concept of placing the development and management of such a project in the hands of a project coordinator, a person who would be responsible for everything from assessing the needs of the community's children to arranging for and coordinating the services themselves. Rather than impose extra duties on faculty and staff, as so often happens when nonacademic programs are placed in a school, this method was seen as a way to minimize the need for teachers to fill the role of social worker and enable them to concentrate on teaching.

To demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach to school-based services, the Hogg Foundation funded demonstration programs in four cities: Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. It pledged $50,000 per year for five years—a total of one million dollars—primarily to support a full-time coordinator at each pilot site. The foundation set aside an equal amount to provide the sites with technical assistance and to conduct an ongoing project evaluation.

The sites selected had a number of similarities. Each was comprised of a middle school and one or two of its feeder elementary schools in a low-income, primarily ethnic-minority neighborhood in a major Texas city. Each targeted three levels of education: preschool, elementary school (grades K-5), and middle school (grades 6-8).

The SoF project had broad goals:

- For the children: to improve the physical and mental health of students and families.
- For the families: to increase the interaction between family members and their children and to increase parent involvement in the schools.
- In the schools: to increase the number of available and affordable services for neighborhood residents and to create a supportive school environment for students, teachers, parents, administrators, and community partners.

- In the communities: to improve the image of the school in the community and to integrate school and community activities.

How this was to be accomplished was left up to the coordinators. Because the coordinator's role was a new one, the position's requirements and methodologies were largely unspecified, the tasks and activities undefined. Generally, the role was envisioned as the name implied, to coordinate—to bring together into a school setting an array of appropriate prevention and intervention programs in the areas of mental health, physical health, and personal enrichment. Each site hired its own coordinator, basing its selection on the characteristics and skills the selection team deemed important for reaching that goal in its community.

The intent was the same at each cluster of schools—to enrich and enhance the lives of the children and their families. To accomplish this, each site addressed the same broad areas: parent education and involvement, conflict resolution and gang prevention, and physical and mental health. Within these topic areas, however, specific programs, the population served, methods of funding, and location and method of implementation varied. The coordinators at the four pilot sites approached their roles differently, depending on their individual skills and interests as well as the needs of the community in which they served.

At the preschool level, for example, programs tended to include Head Start, primary health care, and some form of parent education and child care. In the elementary and middle schools, efforts concentrated on mental health problems such as substance abuse, school dropouts, teen pregnancy, and suicide, as well as on programs designed to promote self-esteem and effective interpersonal relations. The focus and emphasis differed from site to site—one, for example, made parent involvement a priority; another, children with emotional disturbance—depending to a considerable extent on the results of early, informal needs assessments conducted by the project coordinators.

The coordinators were crucial to the project, but they did not work alone. Other key players at each site included school principals, school district administrators, community leaders, parents, program partners, and service providers. These were the people with whom the coordinators worked most closely and who were influential, to varying degrees, in the development of the project.

QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

To learn from a demonstration project, one must be able to find out not only what the effort accomplished but also how it worked—what was the process and who were the players that enabled the project to succeed or that stood in the way of its reaching its goals. Such information is useful for program leaders by providing an opportunity for course correction at a midpoint in a project's development. It also is valuable for persons who might be interested in replicating a project in whole or in part in a community with a similar population and comparable economic and social conditions. Recognizing the importance of this information, the Hogg Foundation from the beginning built both a quantitative and a qualitative evaluation component into the project. This report, which focuses on the project coordinators and their impact on school-based services in the School of the Future, is based on the findings of the qualitative evaluation.

Information on the coordinators was obtained from (1) two surveys, one conducted near the beginning of the project and one at the end of five years, and (2) a series of interviews conducted at regular intervals throughout the funding period. Survey information was collected from key informants—persons who played important roles in the initiation and implementation of the project—at each site early in 1991,* and with many of the initial respondents as well as other persons who became important to the project since that time in mid-1995. The first survey sought baseline information on the relationship between the schools and the community; the second focused on the outcome of the project itself. Questions addressed project strengths, weaknesses, and barriers; perceptions of the project overall and of the coordinators and their roles in its development; and opportunities for project continuation and potential incorporation into the educational system. In addition, interviews were conducted with the project coordinators every two or three months throughout the project and, less frequently, with school principals and school district liaisons to obtain an ongoing record of the tasks, duties, barriers, and accomplishments that comprised the process of development.

The coordinators not only were influential throughout the process of development of the SoF, but also they had an increasing impact on the schools and the communities in which they were located. It might be useful to look first at the activities these key persons carried out, next at their skills and characteristics, then bring these parts together to form a profile of a School of the Future project coordinator.

THE PROJECT COORDINATOR'S ROLE

This is what one coordinator had to say about a typical day.

> This morning I got a call from a lawyer. He wants to support a peer mediation program in all the schools in our area. Later I got a call from the elementary school principal. She wants to start Harambe, a program for African-American families. These programs call for training leaders, for setting up space and arranging times, for getting the word out to students and their parents. All these things fall to the coordinator, to me. This is good—they're School of the Future projects, programs that we initially brought in to our schools, and it's good that they're working and growing. But this doesn't leave time for anything else.

These activities—project administration, service and community outreach, public relations—along with "anything else," comprise the tasks of the project coordinators. Apart from the needs assessments conducted early in the project, the activities were continuing ones, varying in intensity and time commitment but not in the duties themselves.

ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS AND ACTIVITIES

In the project's first year, coordinators' tasks focused primarily on three things: planning; introducing the project to the schools, parents, and community; and making contacts with local service agencies.

The Hogg Foundation had given direction to these activities by suggesting that the first year of the project be devoted to planning. One of the coordinators' primary tasks, then, was not to bring services into the schools immediately but to plan how best to implement this school-based program. Concurrent with planning was the need to build the trust and gain the support of the schools and the community and to develop ways to bring the community into the planning process.

Profile

MARCIA BOOKER **Dallas**

Persons with whom she works have nothing but praise for Marcia Booker.

"She has a knack," says a teacher's aide. "All the children gravitate to her. Kids think if anything goes wrong, she can make it right."
"She is always calm," says a parent. "When she walks down the hall, she seems to calm things down."
"She encourages me to attend classes and workshops," notes a counselor.
"She finds ways for me to get funds to hire teachers for after-school tutoring," points out a school principal.
"She's a good people person," says a district administrator.

In her own words, Booker has always been "a people person." She credits her father — a teacher, social worker, and Baptist minister — with setting a pattern of helping people. "He got rural families what they needed," she remembers, and she has followed that model throughout her life.

She is also a visionary. When she was appointed coordinator of the School of the Future project's Dallas site, she looked at the run-down shopping mall the school district had purchased and envisioned a neighborhood center for children and their families. Then she set to work to turn that vision into reality.

Along with a BA in education and a MA in counseling, Marcia Booker brought a wide variety of experience and knowledge to her new position. She began her career as an art and music teacher, then taught second and fourth grades in Ennis and Corsicana, Texas. In 1961 she took a position with the Dallas Independent School District (DISD), and she has been with the district ever since. Most of her work with the school district has been with the Department of Special Education, where, in addition to serving as troubleshooter for the department director, she has been director of the visiting teacher program, head of Child Find, and specialist and community liaison. it was in the community position—attending meetings and serving on boards of city, county, and state agencies—that she made the contacts with health and human services

personnel that were to prove useful in bringing services together for the School of the Future. "It makes a difference if you know people," she points out.

As coordinator, Booker assumed one role outside her previous experience, that of building designer. Before bringing services into the center, space had to be made available for their use. The former shopping mall, renamed Nolan Estes Plaza, already housed two small elementary schools and previously had contained a high school, but the rest of the center had not been remodelled to accommodate social services. Throughout the project's first year, with the help of DISD architects and specifications from the participating agencies, Booker used walls, paint, carpeting, and baffles or lowered ceilings to turn large open spaces into rooms suitable for counseling, therapy, and other services for children.

For Booker, the project called for cooperation as well as coordination. Although there was no charge apart from maintenance costs for renting space in the center, she established some parameters from the beginning. Chief among these was that all space was to be shared as needed, enabling a greater number of programs to participate. As coordinator, Booker maintained a firm schedule of services to assure optimum use of space by the various agencies.

Under Booker's direction, the School of the Future has grown from three schools to 21 and from serving one neighborhood to serving all of Southern Dallas. The project at Nolan Estes Plaza has become a major community facility that now serves as the flagship for Dallas' nine new Youth and Family Centers. In recognition of her expanded role, the DISD promoted Booker from project coordinator to project director. Whatever her title, she will continue to use her people skills, her knowledge of the city and its resources, and her calm demeanor to improve services and opportunities for children and their families, and in doing so she also will continue to earn the respect and support of everyone with whom she works. A school district administrator summed it up well: "I don't know how you could find another Marcia."

Assess Community Needs

The first major activity at each site served as a foundation for both planning and trust-building: a community needs assessment. The coordinators wanted to learn what the local residents themselves considered crucial issues and what they perceived as major needs of the community. They also recognized that the survey would serve as an opportunity to meet families and acquaint them with the new project.

Differences in how the coordinators handled the surveys gave an early indication of how the SoF was to follow different paths at each site.

- Site 1 - The coordinator participated actively in the survey, knocking on doors and spending time in the neighborhood laundromat to meet and talk to area residents. Later she worked with the Hogg Foundation research associate to analyze the information obtained.
- Site 2 - The school district contracted with a youth leader from another part of the city to develop the survey. Experienced in conducting needs assessments, he used young people from his organization to conduct the interviews.
- Site 3 - First, the coordinator organized and personally carried out an informal household survey of families who were obtaining counseling services in an ongoing program at the middle school. This was followed by a community-wide survey in which a local service agency supervised volunteer interviewers.
- Site 4 - A small survey was administered by a social work intern, followed by a more extensive family survey designed by social work interns and carried out by trained volunteers, all under the coordinator's supervision.

These different approaches notwithstanding, each survey provided the information needed for planning school-based services in the given community.

Gain School Acceptance

The first year

The needs assessments laid the groundwork for the types of services that, in time, were implemented. How the specific services were selected and put in place, however, depended in large part upon the project's acceptance by the school principals, the teachers, and the families and service providers in the community.

When the philosophy of the project and the principals meshed, implementation of the SoF went smoothly. More often, however, school administrators and faculty initially had little understanding of the project and, if anything, were leary of yet another program that, based on their previous experiences, would be short lived as well as mean more work for them. A major task of the coordinators, especially during the SoF's first year, was to acquaint school personnel with the project and convince them of its value.

This task was not as simple as it sounded. Keeping the teachers informed, especially in schools where the coordinators did not have an office, proved difficult. A number of faculty members knew little about the SoF long after it was established. There were other barriers that the coordinators had to overcome: some of the teachers were annoyed at having students pulled out of their classes to attend counseling or other services, some of the regular counselors were concerned that they would be replaced by counseling services brought in by the project, and some of the administrators thought that school-based social services detracted from the primary goal of education.

At one site, for example, the principal and faculty at the middle school were receptive to the idea of the SoF. At the elementary school, however, although the principal was supportive, the faculty was skeptical, concerned that "the SoF was just another plan that wouldn't accomplish much." This negativism was based in part on the fact that the teachers had not been consulted initially about the project. From their perspective, it appeared that the school district had arbitrarily created more work for them.

To counter this skepticism, the coordinator and the school principals considered it essential for staff and community members not just to hear but to see that the project was doing something useful and constructive. Thus, early in the project they agreed to put planning aside in favor of immediate program implementation. To acquaint people with the SoF, the coordinator spoke to school personnel and community leaders. She was visible at the elementary school, where the proximity of her office to that of the principal indicated administrative approval of the project, and at the middle school she posted her schedule so teachers could contact her at any time. To show that the project had something to offer almost everyone, she brought in services of agencies that had been seeking entree into the schools for some time and were prepared to have programs up and running quickly.

The coordinator also conducted lunch-time workshops for faculty and staff on issues such as gangs and working with parents and initiated a family health fair. These activities gave visible proof to the schools and the community that the

SoF was not mere words but was a viable initiative that followed through and accomplished things for the benefit of the entire community.

One drawback to the project's initial work was that some staff members seemed threatened by the SoF, concerned that with outside programs and additional counselors they might no longer be needed. Here, the coordinator's patience and diplomatic skills, such as including these staff members as much as possible in decision making and programming, were essential for the project to develop effectively.

At another site that first year the coordinator was so busy responding to basic needs for food and clothing and meeting medical and housing crises that both school staff and neighborhood residents thought the SoF was a project to provide essential services rather than to coordinate social services. Even the school board lacked a clear understanding of the project's goals. By holding an orientation meeting to introduce the project to faculty and staff and continuing promotion of the SoF at teachers' meetings and community events, the coordinator was able to change the project's image and develop understanding and support.

The project at this site began with one school. When, mid-year, it was implemented in a second elementary school and a middle school, the coordinator spent considerable time orienting and gaining the support of these schools and handling other start-up tasks.

At a third site the coordinator used the needs assessment as an opportunity to overcome the bad reputation of the middle school and in effect "sell" the school to the community. He also met individually and collectively with faculty at each of the schools to get their thoughts on the needs of their respective campuses and help them feel a part of the process.

Only one site actually devoted the first year primarily to planning. Here, because the coordinator didn't participate directly in conducting the needs assessment, she was able to turn her attention toward her site's major initial goals: to establish problem-solving teams at each of the schools and to negotiate with selected service agencies to locate in the former shopping center in which the site's two elementary schools were located.

The coordinator met with the principals three or four times that first year. One principal was active in coordinating the project's Head Start program with her school's pre-kindergarten program, but the other principals seemed uncertain about or uninterested in the SoF and their roles in it. Unlike the

practice at the other sites, the coordinator had virtually no contact with teachers or school staff during the first year.

The next years

Key administrators tend to change often in school systems. In the SoF's first five years, at least one superintendent was replaced as chief administrator for each school system sponsoring a site, and many of the schools had two or three different principals. Because the support of these persons is crucial to the SoF, such changes have meant that the coordinators must, in a sense, begin again to explain the project, gain the support of the new administrator, and learn to work with this person in the most effective way.

At the end of the first year, one coordinator had to face the challenge created when two of the three site principals were transferred to other schools. One had been a firm supporter of the SoF and had worked actively to link his school with local businesses and service agencies; in contrast, the other had never promoted mental health in his school. The coordinator's task was to help one see the need for continuing the efforts of his predecessor and educate the other in the importance of mental health services.

Another coordinator faced working with two new administrators when his site expanded from one to three schools several months after the project began. At the new elementary school the principal had been an administrator at the first elementary and was familiar with the project, so the transition went smoothly. The coordinator began the SoF immediately in the new school with a counseling and therapy program, a service he could initiate by obtaining and supervising social work interns from local colleges. A year later the first principal was replaced, but because the new administrator was already familiar with the SoF, the coordinator did not need to spend time convincing him of the project's merits but could concentrate on developing services.

At the middle school for this site, however, the principal initially was not interested in a mental health program and saw little need for becoming a team player with a new project. These divergent views set up barriers that took the coordinator's skills and effort to remove.

An ongoing task for the coordinators is to reintroduce the SoF each year. At one school, the coordinator used staff meetings to introduce the project to new teachers—16 one year—as well as to update continuing faculty. These introductions would focus on teacher consultations available through an intern project, on simplified new forms available for student referrals, or on how the project could help improve classroom discipline. The coordinator

also spent considerable time conducting workshops and meeting with teachers to raise their morale. A continuing need was to convince the teachers that if students' life skills improve, their academic skills are likely to improve as well.

Another coordinator, not officed in a school, considered it important to visit each school on a regular weekly basis. He listened to teachers talk about their problems, observed how they treated one another, talked to a few about how to increase summer school enrollment or some other relevant issue, and generally made himself visible and available. On these visits he also touched base with the principals, served as a troubleshooter for the counselors, and worked with the parent educators to increase parent participation.

At this site, two schools were added during the fourth year of the project, increasing the administrative duties of the coordinator. Even before services were implemented in these schools, he made sure to include the principals at SoF committee meetings and to meet with them frequently so that they could be a part of the planning process.

Gain Family and Community Acceptance

The coordinators used a variety of techniques to reach families in the neighborhood. These began with the needs assessment interviews, where information about the project could be given to parents along with the survey questions, and they expanded to include making class presentations, going on home visits, and writing and distributing flyers and brochures. Some coordinators spent considerable time meeting with parents in order to develop rapport with them as well as to encourage their ownership of the program.

Despite these efforts, getting parents and families involved in the project was an ongoing challenge at all of the sites. There were two basic reasons: one, the large number of single working parents and parents holding more than one job who do not have time to participate in school activities or attend school functions; the other, the unemployed parents who lack confidence or are ashamed of their status. Each coordinator worked hard to attract families to the schools—lunch-time programs on issues of interest, family nights with free dinners, programs in which the children perform or participate. Although some of these events were successful, they failed to draw parents consistently or get them to spend time volunteering at the school.

At one site, for example, the coordinator disbanded a community advisory committee she had established the first year because she found that most par-

ents were accustomed to and preferred meeting and exchanging information informally rather than in committee meetings. In addition to increasing her family visits, she merged the advisory and executive committees so that parents could still participate if they were interested. The coordinator met regularly with this combined committee, which in time helped develop a health clinic at the elementary school, a service sought by parents, teachers, and administrators alike.

Another coordinator, using a small surplus fund from outside sources, gave the parent council in each school $1,000 to use for whatever purposes they chose. One council used these funds to buy mariachi instruments, another to retire a debt, a third to save for future use. Whatever their decisions, all the participants gained a sense of autonomy from being able to decide for themselves how to spend the money.

Other strategies used across the sites to increase parent participation included providing child care and supper to encourage families to attend meetings and workshops, bringing in well-liked sports figures as speakers, and having family social events. Often such festivities meant obtaining funds from local businesses to cover the cost of food and entertainment.

Parent participation was a priority at one site. The coordinator built upon the small core of parents that had been active in the elementary school prior to the SoF, expanding the group in size and activities. Under the guidance of a volunteer parent educator, the number of participants and the hours of volunteering grew in the project's second and third years, evolving into a support group as well as a daily activity for the most active participants. Although the site's middle school didn't develop an active parent program, the few mothers who did participate there had served as volunteers previously in the project's elementary schools.

Another coordinator met informally one or more times a month with four parent representatives in an effort to get parents more involved in the schools. However, at sites where parent involvement was not an initial priority of the coordinator, little change occurred.

Obtain Space

A shortage of classroom and office space is an ongoing problem in most city schools, and the need to provide space for social service programs compounds the problem. So does the need to keep schools open after hours for social services.

This calls for extra custodial services and places additional responsibility on the principal, who is responsible for the maintenance and safety of his campus.

At one site the coordinator tried to get around the responsibility caveat by getting the school district to release the principals from responsibility for the building when it was used by the project, but to no avail. At another, space was at such a premium that therapy sessions in one school were held in a walled-off corner of a clothing bank for migrant workers, in another in a corner of the speech therapy room. The coordinator tried to get temporary buildings for services at all three schools but here, too, was unsuccessful.

Space needs were at least partially met at the site with few community amenities when the city approved a proposal to develop a neighborhood recreation center. Even before ground was broken for the center, recreation programs that had been held at the schools were moved to a temporary setting created in a vacant strip-shopping center a few blocks away. This provided more program space, eliminated scheduling problems in using the school gym and other facilities, and opened the programs to all neighborhood children, not just those attending the project schools.

With the exception of the project site located in a former shopping center, space remained a problem. Throughout the project, coordinators worked with principals and school boards to find creative ways to house new and expanded programs.

Develop Management Procedures

Another administrative task required early in the project was to develop two types of procedures, one for involving the community in the project's planning and decision making, the other for managing programs and identifying and serving the children most in need of help.

The decision-making groups evolved over time. At one site, for example, two committees were established when the project began: an advisory group composed of key individuals, parents, and representatives of the local parks and recreation department, juvenile court, and other city services and agencies; and an executive committee composed of key school and agency administrators. The coordinator considered the advisory group essential the first year. Members looked at the big picture. Through their perspective and help, the coordinator was able to bring in a health center, summer library, Parents As Teachers, and other programs early in the project. In the project's second year,

however, the two groups were merged, with the most active members continuing to guide the SoF. By the following year, the group no longer met, one member after another leaving to pursue other interests.

At this stage, according to the coordinator, the project no longer needed the original two committees. Rather, it needed advisory groups to monitor, maintain, and obtain funding for specific services.

For program management, coordinators took their cues from the existing arrangements in their schools. One built successfully upon a student assistance program at the middle school, a group formed to discuss how to help children in need of services and to offer counseling and support groups for them. The coordinator joined this group of key school staff—principal, vice principal, counselor, school nurse, visiting teacher, and teacher representatives—attending meetings and helping obtain qualified persons from outside agencies to lead some of the mental health groups.

She was less successful, however, in working with a teachers' group at the elementary school, primarily because the group already had a full agenda. In the second year of the project the coordinator, with the cooperation of the principal, created a SoF Teachers Committee for sharing thoughts and suggestions about the SoF, but this, too, was disbanded because teachers lacked the time to attend.

Another coordinator spent much of the first year adapting the Comer model** of problem-solving teams to her site, working with the school district liaison to set up two groups: a consultation team of school personnel designed to meet weekly to staff referrals, and a parent-teacher group to help develop school plans and policy.

Raise Funds

> "Now I have to spend more time finding money for next year. I've been looking for foundation funding; they have less rigid requirements than city and county government. They give your more flexibility. But for some we're not eligible because we're school based or they only serve a specific county. I'm learning, though, and I'm not discouraged. I just keep trying." — *A Coordinator*

Profile

ROD RADLE **San Antonio**

From surfer to seminarian to social worker, California to Wisconsin to Texas, Rod Radle travelled many roads before he found his vocation and place—helper of children and families in the barrios of San Antonio, Texas. From this setting he was a natural for the School of the Future. Earlier, however, even he could not have predicted the course his life would take.

Radle grew up in Southern California, a part of the surfing and music scene. Then, as a young adult, he made an abrupt turn, leaving the California life for a Carmelite seminary in Milwaukee. His plans were to complete a degree and return to California to work with low-income families. On the first day of class, however, he met a young student named Patti, and once again his life changed direction. Patti's goal was to get her teaching certificate, then seek a "reality education" in Texas. Together, they came to San Antonio, and that city has been home ever since.

Settling in the Hispanic community among the people with whom they would work, Rod and Patti started volunteering with Inner City Development Apostolate, a neighborhood center where they were responsible primarily for recreational activities for children and youth. When the priest who directed the center left, he asked Rod to take over. Since that time more than 20 years ago, Rod and Patti have served as co-directors of what is now called the Inner City Development Corporation. The agency is open daily, and in addition to recreation it provides emergency food and clothing, family education, and summer programs, as well as serves as a community center for neighborhood families.

The Radles have never accepted pay for this joint position. Rather, over the years one would work full time, the other direct the center, then they would trade roles. In these years Rod returned to school, earning a BA, then a master's degree in social work at Our Lady of the Lake University. With this training he started a family therapy program at the state hospital; directed La Clinica Amistad, an urban health administration clinic; and for ten years had a private counseling practice. Throughout the years the Radles have continued to

live among the families with whom they work, first renting and, as their family grew to include four children, in time buying a house in the barrio.

The Radles also have worked as a team with the School of the Future. One of Rod's priorities has been to get parents involved in the schools, building a parent volunteer group as well as providing GED and other parent education classes. Patti served as volunteer coordinator for this effort for the program's first three years. Another priority has been Children's Creative Response to Conflict, a peer mediation program. Patti has played a key role by training teachers and making presentations, and Rod has implemented the program in the site's two elementary schools as well as promoted its use in schools throughout the city.

Radle's academic training has been crucial in carrying out another priority: developing a therapy and social service program for students and their families. With certification in marriage and family therapy, he was able to supervise student interns from two local universities, in this way making available the individual and family therapy, crisis intervention, home visits, and assessments that otherwise would have been too costly to provide.

At the end of the Foundation's five-year funding of the SoF, Rod decided to leave the coordinator position, choosing instead to devote a major portion of his time to another long-time interest, low-cost housing. He had helped start Habitat for Humanity in San Antonio, and more recently he created the San Antonio Alternative Housing Corporation, a community-based project that rehabilitates old houses for low-income families to rent or buy. True to his concern for families, he has built in a strong education component, bringing tenants together once a month to help them with home maintenance as well as provide counseling and guidance as needed.

But Rod has not turned his back on the School of the Future. Under the auspices of the San Antonio Independent School District, he helped set up school-based services in another part of the city and continues to provide guidance to the new project coordinator at the original site. The people of San Antonio were lucky indeed when the road from California through Wisconsin led Rod and Patti Radle to Texas.

Each of the coordinators had a background and skills in service coordination, but none had extensive experience in fund raising. They recognized that with any program on grant money or limited funding, there is a continuing need to search for funds. They also recognized that they needed help in identifying and working with prospective funders and in developing proposals for grant money.

Program Support

Initially, there was some misunderstanding at all of the sites regarding the Hogg Foundation's support. Project participants knew that the foundation had pledged to support the SoF for five years. What many failed to understand at first was that these funds were earmarked for the coordinators' positions; the plan from the beginning was that monies for direct services were to be solicited from outside sources. The foundation's position was that the project should not be dependent on one source of funding but should develop many business and services partners, each site in this way becoming an integral part of its community.

One site encountered this misconception of funding early in the project. Located in a relatively new low-income residential community, it had virtually no businesses or employers from whom to solicit support. Local agencies that the coordinator sought to bring into the schools were stretched for funds, few were able to provide free services, and most thought that the foundation, since it was supporting the SoF, should pay for their services, as well.

Another site, located adjacent to a large housing project, also lacked local business and industry. Although the coordinator had numerous contacts with service agencies, he had few with the business community. To reach potential business partners, he and the elementary school principal wrote to a large number of businesses, explaining the SoF and seeking their support. Very few responded. Of those who did, however, one contributed a significant amount of money and gift certificates to the project, while others expressed an interest in providing mentors for students.

Even when they were able to obtain initial funding for services, the project coordinators had to pursue funds for program continuation when start-up monies ended. For a recreation and counseling program, for example, one coordinator and the program social worker, singly and together, visited churches throughout the area, using success stories to garner more support. The program had worked well with church support and SoF management, and this fund-raising was an effort to continue it that way.

Project Continuation

Almost from the beginning, the topic of project continuation—how the SoF would be funded and maintained after Hogg Foundation support ended—was prominent among the coordinators and foundation staff. By year four of the five-year project, it became the coordinators' major concern and the focus of many of their activities.

All agreed that they should make every effort to continue the SoF. At first they suggested tentative in-house solutions: "The health center's social worker could serve as coordinator," said one; "The counselor can continue to do parent education," said another. But a middle school principal was more realistic: "Don't make the principal think about it. He doesn't have time."

Others offered suggestions. "You need a basic commitment from the school district," one asserted. "You need to identify it with the district, implying long-term implementation, rather than with the foundation," noted another. At the latter's site, the project was not called School of the Future but ISD Family Support Program, which from the start not only linked it with the school district but also more clearly described its purpose. The coordinator directed his efforts to working on a district-wide planning committee to develop a plan that would institutionalize—that is, incorporate within the system—such key aspects of the SoF as mental health services, prenatal and early childhood care and development, and a conflict resolution program. He perceived this plan, if accepted by the district, as a way of fulfilling the foundation's goals as well as making needed services available to all of the district's schools.

He also pointed out a barrier to this approach, one that affected all school systems: that it is difficult for a school board to focus on any one program. "Everyone is after the same dollars," he noted. "They know about SoF, know it has generated grants, but it doesn't stand out from other efforts directed toward the same population. It is important to show major systemic change, not just try to perpetuate the coordinator's position." To this end, he also worked with the local housing authority and school district on a collaborative effort to start a family service center adjacent to the project's elementary school that would house a gym and recreation center as well as the SoF and other school-linked programs.

At another site, the coordinator pointed out that the addition of two elementary schools to the project should indicate to the school board that the SoF could be replicated and expanded. He outlined another selling point: SoF programs were never funded by the foundation, and they could continue

under outside monies. The coordinator's salary, along with commitment to the project, was all that was asked of the school board.

Only the site housed in a former shopping center faced no concerns about project continuation. The school board had been looking into a district-wide program of school-based services when the SoF began, and by the project's fourth year it had established the first of its proposed youth and family centers throughout the city.

Promote the Project

Good public relations were crucial to the project from the beginning. On a routine basis this included attending meetings, giving talks to civic clubs and other groups, showing visitors around the sites, and responding to telephone and written requests for information about the project. Requests increased as the project developed.

One coordinator developed a SoF videotape which was aired on the school district's monthly video program as well as shown by the coordinator when he made presentations. He also invited local media to an open house to introduce the health clinic. Reporters from five local television channels and newspapers attended, along with members of the school board and SoF, resulting in good public relations for the project. He commented that he promoted the project whenever he could in an attempt to counter the words of everyone from grant writers to journalists, who "tend to paint a bleak picture."

At one site, the coordinator didn't want publicity in the first couple of years, preferring to wait until the project had evolved. After three years, he thought that time had come, but a couple of planned public relations opportunities failed to materialize. What did arise was an opportunity for children in the conflict resolution program to appear on cable television. There, fourth and fifth graders in their special black and white T-shirts proved to be excellent representatives of the project.

Handle Miscellaneous Tasks

Some tasks are inherent in almost all social service programs. Required paper work, for example—writing reports, keeping records, planning budgets, and the like—took coordinator time at each of the sites. All were responsible for cleaning up school facilities when used for SoF programs, adjusting program

schedules when their schools changed to year-round or other nontraditional scheduling, and handling the myriad other details that must be worked out by the person in charge of projects with minimal support staff.

Circumstances dictated other obligations. Supervising social work interns in counseling and therapy was a major task for one of the coordinators. Early in the project this took about one-quarter of his time, but later he was able to hire a mental health worker to take over much of the supervision. One other coordinator also was certified to supervise interns, but the site philosophy was that the coordinator should coordinate, not provide or supervise direct services, so he worked with interns only in emergency situations.

A concern about cultural understanding led one coordinator to conduct workshops on how to increase cultural awareness and sensitivity for local agencies and professional groups.

At one site, the coordinator found considerable time consumed by clerical work and bookkeeping tasks that were hers by default when the secretary left. She pointed out that if she hired another secretary she wouldn't have money for training, hiring substitutes so teachers could attend training sessions, or purchasing food for meetings and other forms of program support. Another site had increased clerical work when a major agency and primary funding source for several SoF programs lost a large part of its annual funds, leading to a cutback in administrative support.

SERVICE AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The coordinators spent a major portion of their time working toward the goal of the School of the Future: to bring in and coordinate school-based services to improve the mental health of children and their families. An overview of how they went about it and what they accomplished helps complete the picture of the project coordinators' activities.

Obtain and Coordinate New Programs

Existing school services, community resources, and the needs of the students differed from school to school as well as from site to site. The coordinators sought to meet the most pressing needs of their neighborhoods as identified by the needs assessments. These were:

Site 1 - First priority: recreational space in the neighborhood, after-school

supervision of children, employment opportunities for youth and adults; second priority: health care, child care, transportation

Site 2 - Classes for parents on English as a Second Language (ESL) and high school equivalency (GED) programs, college preparatory instruction, child care

Site 3 - Parent involvement, enrichment programs, coordinated services for children and their families in their own neighborhoods, and prevention or treatment of problems such as substance abuse, school dropout, teen pregnancy, and suicide among high-risk youth

Site 4 - Job training, recreational activities, financial assistance

It should be recognized that they did not bring services into a vacuum. In fact, at the time the SoF began, each of the schools already had some social service programs designed to meet the needs of their populations. Thus, at the start of the project the coordinators had to become familiar with each school's established programs and seek ways in which they might coordinate them with additional services and help them better serve the students and their families.

These differences, along with the interests and skills of the coordinators, had an impact on how the project developed.

Site 1: Developing a Community

One site, for example, located in a relatively new residential area, had never developed either the amenities—services, community organizations, recreational facilities, churches—or commercial resources available in other parts of town. At the elementary school, and with the agreement of the principal and counselors, the coordinator's first task was to bring in a number of visible programs. Many of these were well-established in most city schools, such as after-school activities run by the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and the local police department. Others included a computer program offered by a children's museum, two parent-support groups, a teacher-staff support group, and a counseling group for victims of sexual abuse. For each of these, the coordinator's tasks included making initial and follow-up contacts with the relevant agencies, getting approval of the principal and/or school district, working out time schedules, arranging for space, planning for any required cleanup and security, publicizing the program, and attracting potential participants.

The coordinator strengthened existing programs, increasing a mentoring program, for example, from one volunteer to 50. And she organized a community-wide health fair at the end of the first year, an event so successful that it became an annual affair.

In the project's second year, the coordinator completed arrangements for starting two major projects on the elementary school campus. One was Parents as Teachers, an early childhood intervention program for first-time parents, the other a federally supported counseling and therapy program for students in which supervised graduate students from a local university helped children with serious emotional disorders and their families.

One community effort involved starting a "roving leader" program in which a trained counselor offers recreational activities and counseling to at-risk and troubled youth. The coordinator worked closely with two area residents, an attorney and his wife, who initially had sought her help in starting such a program and, through them, with several churches throughout the city to subsidize the effort.

Persistence was a requirement for obtaining some of the desired services. One program exemplifies this well. Early in the project, the coordinator contacted a local lawyers' group about the possibility of providing free legal information and services for area residents. The group's board was not interested at the time. They had commitments elsewhere, board members said, but they were willing for her to call back every year or so to see if their interests or obligations had changed. The coordinator followed their suggestion. The first year there was no change. The second year, however, she learned that because of other services that had become available, the lawyers' group was free to take volunteers from the school in which they had been serving and bring them to the SoF middle school. The coordinator then convened a luncheon meeting with the school principal, counselor, community education representative, and lawyers' group director to discuss program logistics. As a result of these ongoing efforts, the SoF was able to start free legal aid services one evening a week.

But acquiring the program didn't end the coordinator's tasks. To attend the evening programs, many families needed child care. With the cooperation and help of the life-skills teacher, she arranged for interested students to baby sit, under adult supervision, while parents of young children obtained legal aid. She sought a translator to help parents communicate and a paralegal aid to keep records. Because she was able to share the facilities with a community education program that used classrooms on the same night, she did not have to handle the customary arrangements for building use.

As new programs were introduced in the following years, one of the most creative was Head Start. The coordinator and the director of the local Head Start agency had discussed the possibility of starting a program in the neighborhood

several times. Each time, however, they were deterred by lack of space and stringent facility requirements—one church, for example, couldn't meet the space-per-child qualifications, and the multipurpose center had an after-school program, presenting a time conflict. Then the coordinator took a new approach, bringing together a representative of the Head Start agency, two parents, and the principal of the middle school to explore possibilities for a full-day Head Start program. A true collaborative effort emerged: The agency agreed to provide, and the city to fund, a Head Start program for 60 to 80 youngsters; the school district would provide two portable classrooms; and the middle school principal offered space for the portables on his campus, a first for the city and a contrast to the customary elementary school location. Since the site was across the street from the elementary school, the location was a convenient one. Additionally, it offered parents of young children a positive view of the middle school which one day their children would attend.

But the collaborative efforts went further. Because the school had a strong pre-kindergarten, the coordinator worked out arrangements for the children enrolled in that program to take advantage of the social and health services provided by Head Start. In turn, the Head Start agency provided teaching assistants to pre-kindergarten. And Parents As Teachers, which already was linked to the SoF, recruited families with three-year-olds to enroll their children in Head Start and offered workshops for them.

Site 2: Strengthening Families

In contrast, the school site located across the street from a large housing project had benefited from access to several community agencies and programs for a number of years prior to the SoF project. However, the extreme poverty and unemployment in the area, coupled with the fact that some families had lived in the housing projects for generations, called for additional resources to help strengthen families.

Based on the needs of the neighborhood, the coordinator's priority was to develop an ongoing cooperative arrangement with the state's Children's Protective Services (CPS). He negotiated with that agency, in time getting two intake workers assigned to screen referrals from the SoF. It should be noted that this was seen by school personnel as a mixed blessing: it was good to have CPS at the school to help the children, they agreed, but its presence was tacit acknowledgment of the extensive problems of the community.

Because the coordinator had lived and worked in the area for many years, he was well-acquainted with local services. To obtain up-to-date information about them as well as to acquaint their staffs with the SoF, he met with 18

agencies and programs, then compiled a directory of available programs in order to improve access to and use of services. As a certified training supervisor in marriage and family counseling, the coordinator also was able to obtain counseling and social work interns from two local universities to conduct counseling in the schools.

Another first-year effort was the expansion of the parent volunteer program. Starting with the small group that had been active before the project began, the coordinator obtained a room for the parents to use as their meeting place, offered training in how to work with teachers, initiated GED and other classes for improving education and job potential, and used a variety of other techniques to encourage parents to participate. Through his encouragement and the guidance of the volunteer coordinator, the group gradually became recognized by teachers and students alike for their help in the school.

A major program the second year was the implementation of the Children's Creative Response to Conflict (CCRC) program. This was a favored program of the coordinator, and he viewed it as a centerpiece of the SoF. In the spring he trained a core group of faculty members to conduct the program, and by late summer he had trained the rest of the faculty so that the program could start by fall. He also arranged for a periodic two-hour refresher course for faculty, brought in a social work intern to help implement the program in classes where teachers requested help, and wrote a proposal and was granted funds for a half-time staff person to implement the program in every class in the three SoF schools.

The coordinator didn't limit his efforts to the site schools but also worked to promote the program throughout the city. He was helped in this effort by the volunteer coordinator, who conducted a CCRC workshop at an annual city-wide event and helped a few elementary school students demonstrate the program on a local university's educational television channel.

Some efforts were more successful than others. With funds he obtained from the project's largest corporate sponsor, a statewide grocery chain, this coordinator brought to the schools a program to provide emergency medical supplies to local families and a satellite dish to give classes access to educational programming. With funds from an Hispanic educators' organization, he brought tutors to the school to help students with homework. He also worked with the United Way on a proposed recreation and after-school tutoring program, ultimately spending what he considered "an inordinate amount of time" trying to coordinate the efforts of several social service agencies. Despite his time and efforts, this program did not work out.

Profile

MARILYN RANGEL **Austin**

Marilyn Rangel makes things happen. "She's full of energy," say the people with whom she works. "She's enthusiastic and creative and has a great personality." "She's good with kids and with their parents," they will add; "She perseveres; she gets things done.

Beyond the personal characteristics and social skills that draw people to her, Rangel has a sound knowledge and understanding of the schools and community she serves. A native of Austin, she knows the city's public schools from the perspective of a student. Not only did she go to them, but so did her mother; her two sons, one enrolled in middle school, one in high school, represent the third generation of her family to attend.

She also knows the schools as a professional. A social worker with a BS degree from Incarnate Word College in San Antonio, Rangel spent many years working directly with children with problems, serving as a therapist with the community Mental Health and Mental Retardation program in a low-income area middle school, a counselor in an inhalent abuse treatment and prevention program, and a probation officer with the Juvenile Court.

And she knows the schools as a parent and volunteer. After her second son was born, Rangel spent several years out of the work force. During this time, she served as a school volunteer. She became an advocate for children when, disturbed at the defeat of a school bond in a local election, she confronted the Austin City Council PTA. The bond could have passed, she asserted persuasively, if parents had been better informed about it. She understood this, she explained, because she herself would have voted against it if another parent hadn't sat her down and explained its importance to her.

As a result of her forceful presentation, Rangel was asked to co-chair a committee to work on getting the school bond passed in another election. She accepted the challenge, making presentations to parents to convince them that they could have an impact and developing a manual of questions and answers, costs and benefits, so that they would understand how the bond would affect their children. At the next election, in part because of her efforts, the bond passed.

The School of the Future project presented a new opportunity for Marilyn Rangel. When the Austin school district administrator who was to become the liaison to the project called her and encouraged her to apply for the position of project coordinator, Marilyn thought it over carefully. The timing was right—her youngest child had just started school—and the opportunity to work with children in the community and schools that meant so much to her was enticing. The rest is history, a brief but successful five-year history of Austin's SoF site.

Rangel approached the position of coordinator with the energy and enthusiasm and skills for which she was known. "She asked me in the beginning," noted the elementary school principal, 'What do you want to see happen?' When I told her what I thought we would have to do in order to reach our kids, she said, 'OK, let's work together to get that done'."

Rangel is a team player who has been willing to work nights, weekends, "whenever." She is able to make parents feel comfortable and respected as well as work well with school personnel and city administrators. When something doesn't work, she tries an alternative approach; she doesn't take no for an answer.

Many of the key players in Austin attribute the success of the SoF to the project coordinator. One community member—an attorney and program partner, as well—said it this way: "The idea of trying to do this without Marilyn is frightening. I'm not as concerned as I was. Now we have program experience to draw on; we have credibility in the neighborhood which we didn't have when we started. We needed Marilyn for that. I would want Marilyn around if at all possible in some capacity just because she's a pretty incredible woman."

As the time neared for the project's pilot funding to expire, there was question and concern about how to obtain continuation funding. There was no question, however, about Marilyn Rangel. Teachers and staff, in a campus-wide vote in the site schools, agreed overwhelmingly to keep her on staff. The principals agreed. If the school district wouldn't fund her position, they would find a way to do it themselves. And that is exactly what they did.

Proposal writing was a tool used frequently, and often successfully, by this coordinator. To fill a gap in parent support services, for example, he wrote a proposal through the school district to initiate a prenatal, early childhood, and parent education program in the elementary schools. Though the program itself was not controversial, the coordinator had to contend with and overcome in-fighting and increased competition among local child development programs before he was granted the funds. With a proposal to a health care agency through the Texas Children's Mental Health Plan, he obtained a full-time psychiatric social worker to supervise social work interns in the project schools. Alert to potentially available funds, he continued responding to requests for proposals throughout the project's first five years.

Site 3: Building Partnerships

Circumstances, and in turn tasks, differed for another coordinator. At his site, the middle school had been receiving funds from the Hogg Foundation for school-based counseling for several years prior to the start of the SoF. The service agency that managed the counseling program also managed the site's SoF and was well-established in the community, and the counseling program and the counselor herself were well respected in the neighborhood. The school itself, however, did not have a good reputation, and, in fact, many families enrolled their children elsewhere.

Among the coordinator's first tasks was to try to reverse the middle school's negative image. One of his strategies was to make a video that focused on the positive features of the school, showing it at community meetings as well as at feeder elementary schools to encourage children to enroll.

As was the case with other sites, the coordinator thought it important to bring in services quickly so that the schools and community would see the project as active and viable. Thus, he spent the second half of the first year working to bring programs into the schools. He obtained funds to increase the counseling staff, acquiring a new full-time counselor to handle mental health therapy at the two elementary schools, a second counselor for the middle school, and two social work interns from a local university to train under supervision at the site's main counseling and social service office. He informed families about available health agencies, organized a Parent Appreciation Day in which medical and social service agencies held an open house for families, arranged a meeting of parents, police, and area merchants so they could share information and ways to deal with the drug problem in the community, and worked alongside other concerned citizens to convince the school board to expand the school nurse program from half to full time.

Collaboration, which figured prominently at this site, was exemplified here in a transition program initiated for fifth graders the summer before they started middle school. First, the program was not limited to SoF schools but included the five elementary schools that fed into the middle school: the project's two original schools, two other schools that were added to the project that summer, and the one other school. The one-week program—a coordinated effort of principals, faculty, school district, family service center, and SoF board—was held at the middle school. It was taught by teachers from the middle school and all five feeder elementary schools. The school district provided buses, and community members brought lunch each day. Funds were given by the oil company for which a board member worked to cover the cost of special enticements such as gym uniforms and locker locks for each child.

The program not only helped familiarize children with their new school but urged parents to participate, as well. Parents were invited to visit classes and get information on children's services and teacher expectations, and they were given tips on how to communicate with their children. Students were given tours of the school and practice in changing classes. A special treat was a visit from Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon. Following the success of the program, the coordinator worked with the collaboration group to expand the session to six weeks the following summer.

Some programs didn't actualize as planned or ran into problems that prevented them from effectively carrying out their services. The coordinator had to remain alert to these potential difficulties and take steps to remedy them. One year, for example, the site lost a summer program because, with a summer-school program already scheduled, the administrator of the new program feared that not enough students would enroll to make the project worth implementing. For the following summer, the coordinator worked out details that would enable an adequate number of children to participate in each program, in this way reaching more youngsters in need of help.

Another unexpected problem occurred when a literacy program was unable to attract the specified number of participants due to a requirement for proving legal status. The coordinator worked with a different program, helped find a volunteer to come to the SoF site, obtained needed transportation for her, and ironed out problems so that this program could become an SoF partner. Yet another problem was encountered when two after-school programs didn't follow through on their promises, often failing to appear at the scheduled time. Firmly believing that "children need to be able to count on people," the coordinator terminated these programs.

In the project's fourth year, two schools were added to the SoF site. This called for increased effort by the coordinator to identify additional resources and bring needed programs to these campuses.

Site 4: Creating One-Stop Shopping for Human Services and Mental Health
One site was distinctly different from the others in that it was school linked rather than school based. The physical setting in itself was an unusual one. The school district had purchased a defunct shopping center and located two small elementary schools and a high school in it. In time, the high school was relocated, leaving considerable space unassigned. When the SoF began, the district agreed to let the project use the three-story building, empty except for a couple of offices in the basement, as the site for health and human services for children in the adjacent and nearby schools.

Here, unlike the situation at the other sites, the coordinator's task was not to find space but to make the best use of existing space by planning a good mix of service providers, encouraging them to relocate, and arranging for renovating and leasing space to them. The leasing arrangements she developed with the district liaison were, in essence, that space was free but the agencies were responsible for their own building renovations and a nominal monthly fee for maintenance and security. Agencies also had to agree to work cooperatively with other tenants, sharing space if necessary when scheduling permitted.

Once these plans were established, the coordinator devoted much of her time to contacting agencies, discussing the kinds of services they could provide, negotiating contracts, working with architects and building crews to renovate space, and making all other necessary arrangements for moving services into the plaza. Though simple in concept, negotiations often were long and drawn out, and renovations took close to a year longer than expected. This was primarily due, according to the coordinator, to the normal but slow procedures of a large bureaucracy such as the school district. Renovations were slow for her own office, as well, and until they were completed she continued to commute from her first office some 15 miles from the center.

Two agencies opened in the center at the beginning of the second year, Head Start and OIC, a youth education and employment service. The latter, however, developed financial problems, and the coordinator had to terminate its contract. She continued negotiations with other agencies and scheduled several for opening in the fall of the third year. However, she chose not to introduce the SoF to the community or to publicize individual services until the center was complete because she was concerned that if she introduced just a

few programs, the community would perceive SoF as a counseling center or a program of the Mental Health/Mental Retardation Department rather than a one-stop comprehensive service center.

An advantage at this site was that, from the beginning, according to the coordinator, "everybody wanted to be a part of the project." A disadvantage was that each program that joined the center was funded in a different way, making eligibility for services difficult to coordinate and paperwork seemingly endless. The coordinator devoted considerable effort to drafting a short, simple form that would be accepted and used by each of the programs, thus cutting down on time-consuming paperwork. She also sought to simplify the service delivery system for psychologists and visiting teachers, arranging for them to work with all children, regardless of whether they were in special or regular education. However, the special education and regular education teachers were reluctant to work with what they considered one-another's students, and by the end of the second year, she was still trying to coordinate the various funding sources and get the teachers to work with all of the students.

A major collaborative effort involved bringing together two large bureaucracies, the school district and the mental health/mental retardation agency (MHMR), in a transition project to help children who had been hospitalized for emotional disturbance return to the public schools. The coordinator worked with these organizations, setting up rooms for classes and therapy in the center, then getting the district to provide teachers and teacher assistants for the education component, MHMR to provide therapists for counseling and a psychiatrist to monitor medications. Because this was a school district project, it accepted children from other schools in the city in addition to those in the SoF project.

Other activities occupied the coordinator's time: arranging for a week-long training session for mental health problem-solving teams at each school, contracting with a family counseling agency to provide internships for school psychologists and visiting teachers, and contracting with a youth center director to conduct a survey to identify community resources. Also in the second year, recognizing that the arrangement with the family counseling agency was not working out well, the coordinator and school district liaison worked together to develop an Assistance and Consultation Team at the middle school in which a team of professionals would meet weekly to deal with individual student cases and general school issues. To make sure that this approach was effective, the coordinator periodically attended these meetings.

Develop Networks and Community Relationships

Networking was a major activity for the coordinators at each site. Basically, this involved getting to know the key players—agency directors and service providers, community leaders, parents, school personnel—and maintaining good relations with them. It involved bringing people together, maintaining communication, coordinating people and projects, and keeping the various players informed. Networking skills and the establishment of a good community network were essential for coordinators in developing an effective SoF.

One coordinator spent much time that first year in community outreach to establish ties with local agencies. He emphasized repeatedly that the SoF was not in competition with existing services but wanted to work with them cooperatively. A turning point came when he arranged a luncheon for representatives of business and service agencies in the area, for it encouraged them to form partnerships with the SoF and laid the groundwork for increased participation by area leaders. Each year after that, business partners who had shown their commitment to the project were invited to a luncheon at which their efforts were acknowledged.

Another coordinator helped obtain recognition for service organizations and volunteers by linking them with Adopt-A-School, which mentions volunteers in its newsletters and presents awards at an annual banquet.

On the premise that good relationships facilitate problem resolution, one coordinator repeatedly brought school and other key personnel together, then listened to both sides of an issue and helped them resolve it. He also worked more directly with families and agencies than the other coordinators. For example, when child abuse was reported to Child Protective Services, he would talk to the parent in person or on the phone before the CPS worker arrived. He found that in some cases the problem could be resolved in this way, saving the family from loss of dignity and the case worker from processing the case.

Facilitate Evaluation

Although the coordinators were not responsible for the project's evaluation component, they were committed to facilitating data gathering at their respective sites. Their roles consisted of obtaining parental permission to administer the surveys, arranging with the principals and teachers for times to administer them, convincing teachers of their importance, administering surveys if need-

ed, and being available for interviews themselves as part of the evaluation process. In general, they were positive about the evaluation, seeing it as a selling point for the project because it would strengthen credibility.

Others had some concerns. One was that the results might not accurately reflect the progress of the SoF; another that "you can't be sure that any one thing is making a difference." Nonetheless, pointed out a counselor, "although there is no clear cause and effect, the evaluation does a good job of generating illustrative data."

Several teachers were concerned about confidentiality and worried that information might be tracked back to the students. The coordinator gave a step-by-step explanation of how students become "just a number" so that confidentiality could be maintained, and he considered it important to repeat this explanation each year to inform new teachers and reassure the others.

A problem arose at one site when a candidate for the school board used the evaluation as a campaign issue for media attention. This negative publicity—the issue was that mental health data were being collected from teachers using a nationally recognized instrument on children without their parents knowledge or consent—called for intervention of the coordinator and Hogg Foundation staff and for a reassessment of ways to obtain parental consent. To avoid any appearance of impropriety, the foundation decided to seek active rather than passive consent of the parents. This meant that, rather than assume that parents consented to the evaluation unless they returned a form to the school stating their objection to it, each parent had to be asked if he would sign a statement of consent. Although this method involved considerably more work and created subsequent problems for the evaluation research, the coordinator saw it as an opportunity to visit all homes in the neighborhood and tell them about the programs offered by the SoF and other available neighborhood services.

To facilitate ongoing evaluation, one coordinator started a computerized data base of all students at his site and the services they were getting. With this information, studies could be made of the relationships between program participation and academic accomplishments and other issues.

Profile

ALFREDO TIJERINA **Houston**

If you call the Houston School of the Future office and get the recording, listen fast. In rapid-fire Spanish, then English—clearly, pleasantly, and in the space of 30 seconds—you will hear all you need to know about getting in touch with the School of the Future project.

This would be a fitting introduction to Alfredo Tijerina, project coordinator. Articulate and at ease in two languages, he is quick to tell people about the importance of mental health services for children and their families and how the SoF project is helping provide these services. In part a public relations man, he has spent considerable time "marketing, selling, getting out there" to tell people about the project. He also has taken advantage of every opportunity to speak or appear on television and radio to make the community aware of the project and the need for school-based services.

But Alfredo is far more than a PR person. Throughout the project, he has viewed his main job as a troubleshooter, keeping abreast of the needs of students and their families, finding ways to fill gaps in school-based services, monitoring problems that arise, seeking funding, and working with the many partners who comprise the School of the Future. He also has viewed his role as a resource, and with his extensive knowledge of community organizations, political systems, and existing services, he has filled that role well. If he isn't familiar with a needed resource, he knows whom to ask.

Alfredo brought a strong educational and professional background to his position as coordinator. A native of San Antonio, he earned a bachelor's degree in sociology and philosophy as well as a Christian Education degree from Centenary College, Louisiana, and a master's degree in social work from the University of Georgia. He is a certified social worker in Texas and a licensed chemical dependency counselor. In addition to working for several years as a social worker and therapist for Harris County Psychiatric Center Child and Adolescent Services, he has worked with a dropout prevention project and other programs of the Houston Independent School District.

Of the four SoF coordinators, Tijerina is the only one not based on a school campus, officing instead at the Family Service Center, a private nonprofit agency that administers the Houston demonstration project. Because of this, he has been careful to allocate an equal amount of time for visiting each school every week to listen to the teachers, touch base with the principals, and generally help faculty and staff in any way he can. He thinks being based off campus frees him to work equally with each school. As he has pointed out, "When there's a crisis at any of the schools, we can step in and handle it. When the system is inundated, we can help."

Help he does, as those with whom he has worked are quick to testify. An active member of both the neighborhood association and the SoF Board firmly believes that "without Alfredo, it (the SoF project) wouldn't be nearly so successful." She credits him—his energy, effort, and enthusiasm—with bringing such major services as the Multi-Ethnic Cultural Association, Literary Advance, and Community Partners (manager of the health clinic at the middle school) into the School of the Future. As the director of Community Partners points out, this middle school is the only one in Houston with a health clinic, and she credits Tijerina with bringing that about.

If Alfredo could be granted a wish to have more time, he would devote it to one of his major concerns: cultural understanding. He considers this crucial, especially in a district with a high percentage of Hispanic children. "I would like to do more training to overcome misinformation and ignorance," he says. "I'd especially like to spend time with teachers to help them understand the Hispanic culture."

He does find time to give workshops and speak to groups on request to help them learn more about the various cultures with whom they work and live. Among Alfredo Tijerina's many and varied roles as SoF coordinator, perhaps his role as a model and teacher for cultural acceptance and understanding should head the list.

PROFILE OF THE PROJECT COORDINATORS

The project coordinators brought a variety of skills and experiences to their work with the School of the Future, and though they approached their tasks differently, by the end of the project they had two important things in common. One was the fact that each stayed with the project for its entire five years. This is a rare occurrence in programs on grant money, and it served the project well. The other was the tremendous esteem in which each of the coordinators was held. In fact, many of the respondents to the Key Informant Study conducted at the end of the project—school principals, teachers, community leaders, service providers, school district board members and administrators, and parents—could picture no one else as coordinator at their respective sites.

In the perspective of a few of the key players:

> She is such an asset to this campus, a resource, like a silent partner. She works out particulars, anticipates problems and needs. She knows the schools: space, details of campus, staff. She serves as an ambassador for our campus. She focuses on how bright things can be. Any program she handles will work. Personality, organizational ability, judgment, she's got them all. — *A principal*

> She became a kind of focal point, organizing different groups. She became the hub through which everyone else became connected. If it hadn't been for the coordinator, we never would have gotten our program on the school campus. — *A service provider*

> It was her personality; she gets things done. She got me into the schools. She made it possible for the program to set up offices in the schools. She was the liaison. She set the schools at ease . . helped us establish trust with the schools. Another thing was that if we got into a spot where we didn't know what to do, she was there to help us out. We had faith in her ability. I would not have been a good advocate for the program had I not known that she would be there pecking away for me. — *An attorney and community member*

> I was there because of her. She brought me to the table. She was always on my side; she believed in me; she knew I could get things

done. She was the one that got me pumped up. I guess you could say she empowered me. — *A community activist*

The combination of multifaceted skills and commitment to the community is very rare. It will be difficult to fill his shoes when he leaves. — *A therapist*

The Selection Process

Because the coordinator was expected to serve as the key person in the development of the School of the Future at each site, considerable thought was put into the type of professional who might best fill this role. And since there was no precedent for the particular skills or training required to be a project coordinator, each site followed its own dictates in carrying out the selection process.

One site sought someone who was bilingual/bicultural, knowledgable about the school system and community programs, and proficient in both written and oral communication. The project liaison with the school district, along with the principals of the participating schools, conducted interviews and selected the coordinator.

Another site was more interested in finding someone who worked within the school system and would be able to help integrate the SoF throughout the district. A strong link with parents, the community, and local agencies was another important consideration. Here the project liaison with the school district, with the approval of the school board, selected a person who had the desired qualities and with whom she had a good working relationship. Neither the principals nor community members were asked to participate in the selection process, causing school personnel to view the project as an effort imposed by the district rather than a school initiative.

A third site wanted someone bilingual/bicultural with experience in grassroots organizing. They did not want an educator or a therapist; they believed they had plenty of those. Rather, they preferred someone who had worked within the school system but whose experience was community focused rather than strictly in education or clinical work. The selection team—the school district liaison and the head of the family service agency that managed the project at this site—chose a man with a background in social work and community organizing who had developed a good working relationship with the liaison in previous work together. "We agreed up front that we knew what

we wanted," one said. He was a known quantity. We knew he could fit the bill, and he has."

Proven commitment to the community was an impoprtant consideration at the fourth site. The search committee, which was composed of school and community members who had written the proposal for the project, selected a man who, as the director of a neighborhood community center and resident of the area for 20 years, had shown that commitment. They considered that his experience and contacts in the community outweighed the fact that he was neither Hispanic nor Spanish speaking in a predominantly bilingual/bicultural neighborhood.

As a result of the selection process, two men and two women were hired as project coordinators. Two were Hispanic, one African American, and one Anglo. Three were social workers, two with master's degrees, and one was a teacher and special education administrator. All had had from 15 to 30 years experience in the field.

They also had a number of individual characteristics and skills in common, although their methods of program development differed considerably. A view of the coordinators as seen by key-players in the project as well as by the coordinators themselves, provides a more complete profile.

Coordinators' Skills and Characteristics

The Key Players' Perspectives

To learn how persons who were active in or well-acquainted with the SoF viewed the coordinators, one of the questions on the Key Informant Survey asked the respondents what they considered to be the coordinators' personal strengths that led to the project's success. "What did the coordinator bring to the project in terms of skills and experience?" was one question, followed by, "How has this affected the impact of the project?" No list of traits was given to trigger responses; the respondents could answer in any way they chose. Even with this open-ended approach, an overwhelming majority at each site said virtually the same thing: the coordinator's greatest strength was interpersonal skills. A summary of survey responses follows.

COORDINATOR CHARACTERISTICS

CHARACTERISTICS	SITE *(number of respondents)*			
	1*(15)*	**2***(7)*	**3***(13)*	**4***(19)*
Interpersonal skills*	33	17	30	26
Personal characteristics*	25	12	16	15
Knowledge and understanding of community	7	3	6	12
Knowledge and understanding of school systems, politics	8	5	3	2
Organizational skills	7	3	6	5
Knowledge of resources, agencies, funding sources	5	5	1	5
Communications skills	5	2	4	5
Leadership, supervisory skills	4	3	4	3
Management skills	4	3	2	5
Training, education, work experience	3	3	3	7
Networking skills	2	1	4	4
Bilingual/bicultural	2	-	6	1
Public relations skills	1	1	1	3

* The number of responses exceeds the number of respondents because a variety of skills and characteristics cited fit into this category.

Other traits mentioned, but not by more than two or three respondents, were computer skills, grant-writing ability, and knowledge of evaluation.

Numbers tell only a part of the story. Many of the Key Informant Survey respondents expanded upon the skills they listed, defining them in greater detail and explaining how a coordinator demonstrated these strengths in carrying out the varied activities. A sample of their comments follows to enhance the list of coordinator characteristics.

Interpersonal skills

As noted above, whatever the perspectives and roles of the survey respondents, they viewed interpersonal skills as a successful project coordinator's most important ability. Among the most frequent comments were that he or she:

- knows how to work with people
- is open and available to the staff
- is able to develop trust and credibility
- is able to work with families as well as city leaders
- is sensitive to and understanding of problems
- works well with principals and with agencies
- is a good listener and a good negotiator
- is genuine, down-to-earth, sincere
- is kind-hearted, loving, caring
- is a facilitator, a team player

Other comments explain how the coordinators demonstrated these skills.

- She supports teachers by showing, for example, that she understands how "pull-out programs"—those that call for taking children out of class to attend programs—interrupt the teaching cycle.
- He always thanks people who have helped with an event, recognizes people for their contributions, anticipates their needs.
- She earned their respect, she didn't demand it.
- She doesn't undermine staff members. She is the only non-ISD person to have a master key to the building.
- He is able to identify with parents, attract them, make them feel respected; and he also relates well to the city representatives.
- She bounces around and she contacts people and she makes things happen, and it takes someone like that. I attribute (the success of the project) to her because she gets things done. And she's so full of enthusiasm.
- He's good at drawing parents into the process, getting them involved through programs.
- Because she is credible, we have credibility. When she said to the princi-

pal, "Hey, these guys are OK, this will be a good program and we can make it work," then the principal said "OK, we can let them in."

- She comes up with ideas, puts them in people's souls. She is the big motivation to get things done.
- He's a natural for this position. You have to relate to people; it's not enough just to do the job.
- He's calm, open, friendly, a good listener, charismatic.
- He's sincere, committed, interested in people; he's not there just for the paycheck.

Personal characteristics

Among the personal characteristics deemed most important were personality, flexibility, creativity, energy, and enthusiasm. Also mentioned repeatedly were intelligence, perseverence, patience, a positive outlook, and a realistic approach. And each of the coordinators was referred to time and time again as a doer, a person who makes things happen.

Following are some of the comments from participants at the four SoF sites.

- Personality. If the coordinator doesn't have it, or it's wrong, if he can't rally people around him, the project won't work.
- He's not territorial, and this is crucial.
- If something doesn't wôrk, she goes another route. If she goes to one person and he can't help her, she's at another person's door.
- He can be realistic about what's going on but at the same time be an advocate for the community.
- There came a time when I said the multipurpose center might not happen, and she kind of picked me up and said, "Look, if you want something bad enough you can do it; it's just a matter of being persistent. Keep in focus what you want to do."
- When a grant for counseling fell through, she said, "I'm going to go out there and find more things." She was instrumental in getting us the health center, Parents As Teachers, the Roving Leader . . . she has come through time after time. It's made a difference.
- At first we wondered whether she'd listen, and then whether she'd come across with the goods. She listened to us, and she got in there and did things with us. If we were here on a work day, she was here on a work day. She didn't separate herself from the staff and act like an auxiliary person. She became as much a part of the staff as she could. She's made a place for herself.
- He doesn't wait for someone to tell him what to do.
- I've called on him for many things, and he's always cooperative. For example, he helped find a social worker for the clinic.

- He doesn't put on airs; no phoniness; he's down-to-earth. Parents will read you in a minute if you're phony.
- He follows through. Politicians promise, but they don't follow through.

Knowledge and understanding of community; of school systems; of resources, agencies, and funding sources

Knowledge and understanding were mentioned often. A coordinator must know and understand the community and the school system—and the politics and dynamics of each—in order to work with these systems, gain their trust and respect, and overcome the inevitable barriers to coordinating services. He or she must know and understand resources, agencies, and funding sources in order to obtain and coordinate appropriate services. And beyond the specific knowledge, a coordinator must be able to see how these systems, along with their clients or participants, overlap, for this is implicit in the concept of coordinated services.

- He's a liaison between the community and those with power to enact changes.
- Through her understanding of school people and school rules and regulations, she's been able to help orient other organizations to a school environment.
- You need a very talented person in the coordinator position. That person has got to understand how schools function and to understand the politics involved.
- Her knowledge of the school system and nonprofit agencies helps her avoid the pitfalls of politics.
- She knows the school system and how to access resources within the system and get the support of district people. For example, when she needed a phone she knew how to get it quickly. She's used to handling purchase orders, knows how to get people to share and to donate.

Networking skills

To make the best use of this knowledge and understanding, certain skills are essential. One of these is the ability to network—to have contacts and know whom to contact, to be able to share information and exchange services with individuals and organizations in the community and in the service area.

- She introduced us to many people. If we had questions, she could answer them. Initially that was very important.
- He knows how to use resources. If he doesn't have the answer, he'll find one.
- She could contact the right people so that community meetings, different kinds of meetings from the neighborhood association to the recre-

ation center advisory board to the mayor's night out to publicize a hearing on the curfew, could start happening in the community and the schools.

- He has connections in this city; he's well thought of.
- He has a wide network, many connections in the community.
- Her work with adopters—increasing their numbers, building relationships—has been a key success of the program.

Communications skills

Another crucial skill for working in schools and communities is the ability to communicate. Several respondents pointed out that it was essential for a coordinator to communicate well with people in different positions and with different interests and concerns, among them parents, teachers, school administrators, agency personnel, board members, city administrators, and foundation directors.

- She articulates both needs and solutions. To inform parents about the evaluation, for example, she sent messages to families, assuring them that if they wanted more information, they should call her. When one parent took her up on it, the coordinator showed her the survey and talked to her about it until she was fully satisfied.
- She checks at key points to make sure she's going in the direction the principal wants; she knows how far to push the administrator.
- She took time to know the teachers. She sat in the teachers' lounge, made staff presentations, listened to staff, heard what they said they needed—and she's been able to do what they said needed to be done.
- He's willing to talk to administrators, parents, visitors, service providers. He keeps various components of the project informed about what others are doing.

Leadership and supervisory skills

A number of respondents commented upon the importance of supervising people by giving them guidance but not telling them what to do. They also stressed the need to bring out the best in people, to enable them to reach their potential. From the responses, it would appear that each of the coordinators was adept at these skills.

- She enables programs to work independently; she doesn't make demands on them or tell them what to do.
- She doesn't leave anyone out, inspires people to take responsibilities, is sensitive to positive and negative vibrations.
- She's able to bring out the best in people. She helps you in the process but understands you have to do things yourself.
- She gives direction, saying "you may want to consider . . . but your idea is

good. You decide which to do." I learn from that.

- She's good at assessing people, able to get the most out of them, help them develop.
- He has the ability and security to give people a chance to be part of the process. You must guide and supervise, but you want them to feel like they're doing it.

Organizational skills

As a school district administrator said, "the coordinator has all the givens, all the basic abilities." Implicit in this statement were skills essential for the director of virtually any project, such as the ability to organize and manage and get along with both board members and staff. Other respondents had these comments to make:

- She reminds principals when it's time to plan for programs or events.
- Principals are consumed by school demands. They don't have time to tie the pieces together and they are interested in their own schools. If the coordinator is a scattered type, it wouldn't work.
- He follows up, gets people to meetings, sees that things get done. He's consistent.

Management skills

- She's good at logistics planning, scheduling, financial and personnel management.
- He has the ability to allow people to participate, then pull everything together.
- He took responsibility; we didn't have to worry about it. I knew he'd tell me if I needed to know something.
- He's hard working, capable, efficient.

Public relations skills

Public relations were addressed on two levels: "selling" the project to the schools and participants, and selling it to potential funding sources and the community at large.

- Half the trick of making a project work is selling it. You have to promote, get people excited. When she speaks, people get interested.
- He comes to all events; he's often here. He gets right in there, rolls up his sleeves, scoops up the ice cream.
- He's not afraid to sell the project.

Training, education, work experience

Less emphasis was placed on education and training than might be expected. The fact that three of the four coordinators were social workers, one a

teacher, seemed less important to the respondents than the fact that all four had the requisite knowledge base and skills for developing a program of school-based services. Respondents at each site mentioned that their coordinator was experienced and had the wisdom gained from that experience. Specific training was emphasized only at one site, where the coordinator was able to expand the mental health counseling program by supervising social work interns from local universities.

- As an experienced teacher, she has radar for spotting problems, then follows through to correct them.
- With a social work background and certification, he can supervise interns.

Bilingual/bicultural

The need for a bilingual coordinator depended upon the makeup of a community. It should be noted, however, that in one predominantly Hispanic neighborhood, the fact that the coordinator had lived and worked in the area for many years overrode the fact that he was neither Hispanic nor bilingual.

- It's important due to the schools' majority population. Others can be culturally sensitive, but this eliminates another excuse barrier.
- Cultural sensitivity is essential in this community.

A strength and a weakness

"The project's greatest strength was the coordinator." Going above and beyond the individual characteristics and skills of the coordinators, many respondents viewed their respective coordinators as the ideal person for the job.

- One of the main reasons the project is so successful is because of the coordinator.
- I think the key to the project's success was the selection of the coordinator. Without him, I don't think any of these things would have happened.
- The combination of multifaceted skills and commitment to community is very rare. It will be very difficult to fill his shoes when he leaves.
- I wish we could clone him and send the clones to other schools.
- I don't know how you could find another like her.

But there is also a drawback to having a strong coordinator, and some respondents pointed this out.

- People rely on her too much. In meetings, the coordinator's name often comes up; she is credited with knowing everything. If she left it would be difficult; the project would have less accountability.
- The project's greatest strength—the coordinator—is also its greatest weakness, because I don't think any program should be so dependent on one individual. If that person leaves, the program can suffer.

Few criticisms were mentioned. One parent, for example, noted that the coordinator wasn't doing enough to get the project known because too many people didn't know about it. "There's a lot of parents like myself who don't attend PTA or other meetings. She needs to do more rigorous outreach like send more flyers home and put notes on a billboard in front of the school." More often, however, comments were to the effect that the coordinator had all the requisite skills and characteristics. "He has all the attributes," said one; another, "He's a gem."

The Coordinators' Perspectives

When the coordinators themselves were asked what skills they deemed most important for serving successfully in their positions, their responses were right in line with those of the other key persons surveyed. Apparently they shared the ability to look at themselves honestly as well as to recognize the qualities that enabled them to carry out their work.

They, too, listed interpersonal skills as paramount. "People skills," one noted, "that says a lot." Each also mentioned the importance of a strong knowledge base of the schools, the community, agencies, and politics, of being a doer, and of being experienced. "It helps to have been around for awhile," is the way one expressed it. Another: "I'm aware of what doesn't work, which groups don't get along with one another, and I can look for other ways to bring people together."

Each considered communication essential—listening to people, hearing what they say, finding ways to negotiate—and each mentioned being creative, finding alternative ways "to move money around" and accomplish other tasks. Commitment, enthusiasm, energy or drive, flexibility, and the ability to bring out people's strengths were considered important attributes. In addition, all expressed the need and had proven a willingness to work well beyond regular hours, working "nights, weekends, whenever," as one explained.

Only one coordinator listed specific skills—those of grant writing, public relations, fund raising, therapy, and working with groups—and one acknowledged that she could use stronger grant-writing skills. On the other hand, the latter was pleased that the project didn't rely on grants but brought in more solid, less "soft-money" services without them. And one coordinator considered it important at her site to be bilingual and Hispanic as an increasing majority of the students there were Hispanic.

EPILOGUE

"Although the Hogg Foundation has said that after five years it will no longer fund the School of the Future, the schools won't let the project die."

— *A Project Coordinator, March 1993*

For social service programs on limited or short-term funding, it is customary, around the midway point of a project, for the director to begin seeking additional funds with which to continue the program. This is no easy task. Sometimes the program is able to continue only if it cuts back on staff and services; more often, when the initial funding comes to an end, the program also comes to an end.

The School of the Future project followed the customary procedure. The Hogg Foundation granted funds for five years. True to form, the project coordinators spent considerable time during the final two years seeking outside funds and commitments. The results, however, were unusual: each was successful. Not only have the four sites continued, but three of the sites have expanded and two have become a part of their respective local school systems. In keeping with the fact that each site differed from the beginning in focus and approach, each differed also in status and type of funding as it entered its sixth year.

Dallas

The School of the Future project in Dallas was the first to become an integral part of its local school district. For one thing, when the project began in Dallas, the timing was right. The school district's Education for Excellence Commission had just issued a report recommending that a formal link be established between public schools and community services by establishing centers where these services could be coordinated and made accessible for the students and their families.

The School of the Future fit this concept perfectly. Almost from the start, the SoF project became the model for the centers that were to be developed throughout the city. In March 1993, a year-and-a-half after the project began,

the Youth and Family Service Coordinating Council moved to establish 14 centers in Dallas County similar to the one created at Nolan Estes Plaza. The project hired a secretary, and the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) placed some programs at the Plaza to ensure continued funding for the position.

The following January, the DISD Board approved a plan to move forward with the Youth and Family Centers. With the enthusiastic support of the new school superintendent, the board decided to establish nine centers in all, with the SoF included among the first three to be developed, and hired a director to coordinate these school-linked services centers for the district. Using the SoF concept as a basis for obtaining additional funds, the DISD received a large family preservation grant that allowed it to undertake this expansion. In addition, the board promoted the SoF coordinator to site manager and expanded her responsibilities from the original three schools to the 21 schools, elementary through high school, that would comprise the Youth and Family Center in the South Oak Cliff section of the city.

The School of the Future at Nolan Estes Plaza has become the flagship of Dallas' Youth and Family Centers. Although the SoF name has been subsumed by the districts' designation, the concept is continuing, and the original project has set the tone for the centers that will follow.

San Antonio

In contrast to the project in Dallas, the adoption of the SoF by the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) was almost a last-minute decision. It wasn't until May 1995, following many presentations to district administrators by the coordinator and with the encouragement of the Texas Education Association, that the school superintendent announced the decision to support the SoF and to expand the model to strategic schools throughout the district.

The efforts to achieve this goal, however, were anything but precipitous. In an effort to identify the project with the school district, the coordinator from the beginning called the SoF the SAISD Family Support Program(FSP). To become independent of foundation funding, he sought major funds from federal and state government programs. He also played a key role in developing a strategic plan for the SAISD that would incorporate many aspects of the SoF, among them mental health services, prenatal and early childhood care and development, and Children's Creative Response to Conflict, into the district's program. Several changes marked the beginning of the project's sixth year. Under

SAISD auspices, the FSP is continuing in the pilot site's two elementary schools, now designated Westside schools, and has started in a group of five elementary schools and one middle school, designated Eastside schools. (The pilot site's middle school chose not to participate after foundation funding ended.) The coordinator was encouraged to take a new position as director of FSP initiatives throughout the district, but he opted to pursue other interests. He agreed, however, to continue on a half-time basis for three months to interview candidates for his former position, work with the principals of the Eastside schools to hire staff, and coordinate renovations to create rooms for therapy and other social services in the newly acquired schools.

The new coordinator, based at the elementary school that was the linchpin of the original SoF, now serves as coordinator for both the Westside and Eastside schools. Under the current structure, each school has a master's degree social worker who serves as the community liaison and provides FSP leadership at his or her site. Through a redefinition of counseling positions, each school also has been able to hire a therapist and a family support facilitator on at least a part-time basis. For schools that serve as internship sites for local universities, the MSW social workers are responsible for supervising the interns.

The support of the school superintendent was the turning point in guaranteeing the continuation of the SoF in San Antonio. This is the only one of the four sites that has a new project coordinator for its sixth, and expanded, year of operation.

Houston

Throughout the SoF's first five years, the Family Service Center (FSC) in Houston, a private nonprofit agency, served as the fiscal agent for the SoF, sharing primary responsibility for the project with the Houston Independent School District (HISD). Once the project was well underway, the coordinator, the school district liaison, and the director of the FSC turned their attention to how they might continue the project when Hogg Foundation funding ended.

None of the services brought into the schools by the project relied upon foundation support. In fact, the project had developed an enviable number of partnerships with local businesses and industries to obtain support for the school-based programs. The key players agreed, however, that for the programs to work effectively and for the teachers to be relieved of the need to act as social workers, a project coordinator was essential. Furthermore, they

recognized that in order to gain the support of the community and the HISD, they would have to show that the SoF was making a difference in the schools, that it was improving the quality of life of participating families, and that the project model was not limited to the pilot site.

One indication of the project's acceptance was the addition of two elementary schools in the fall of 1993. One already had some services and could help the project as well as benefit from it. In contrast, the other had almost overwhelming problems—extreme poverty, violence, adult gangs, drugs—and no services at all. In part because of their differences, these schools demonstrated the model's potential for replication and expansion.

As a result of presentations and meetings with school administrators and board members, the SoF has been assured of continuation for year six. Services of the SoF coordinator are being supported by the HISD through discretionary funding from the North Central area of the district and by the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast through its support of the FSC. The Executive Committee of the Partnership Council, a group of parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and representatives of key community agencies, serves in an advisory capacity for the project. All of the programs under the SoF umbrella are being continued through outside funding and collaborative efforts. Exemplifying these efforts are the health clinic at the middle school, which is managed by Community Partners under funding from the Fondren Foundation, and, at two of the elementary schools, the SoF Even Start Family Literacy Project, which is supported by the U.S. Department of Education through the Texas Education Agency and implemented collaboratively by the Post Oak "Acorn" School, Literacy Advance, Inc., Community Partners, MECA, Houston Community College, and SoF.

With its broad base of support and its continuing efforts to provide needed school-based services, the SoF has the potential for continuation beyond year six under some form of school district funding.

Austin

The project coordinator at the Austin site approached the completion of the SoF's five-year funding by the Hogg Foundation from a different perspective than the other coordinators. When she accepted the position as coordinator, she had been told by the school district liaison that she was to "work herself out of a job." She understood this to mean that she should develop the project so that, in time, it could continue to function without a coordinator at the helm.

In light of this understanding, and based on her view that a program should not be dependent on one key player, the coordinator looked into ways to train people to manage different aspects of the project if she were to leave. Midway through the funding cycle, she determined that any programs to be brought into her site's schools should be set up by the end of the project's fourth year, with the fifth year reserved for solidifying what was in place and preparing others to maintain the programs. The coordinator envisioned an advisory committee for each program composed of school staff and parents, committees similar to those she had already put in place for the Widen Health Center, Parents As Teachers, and the Roving Leader program. She also viewed the health center as the key to maintaining the SoF in the schools, with the center's social worker serving in the project coordinator's stead when foundation funding expired.

By the project's fifth year, however, the prevailing attitude changed. There was pressure to get a commitment from the school district to continue the SoF; and there was encouragement to obtain funds from other sources in order to maintain the coordinator's position as well as allow for program expansion. Ultimately, the coordinator spent a major part of the project's fifth year seeking continuation support.

As the project's final year drew to an end, it was apparent that the school district was not planning to include the SoF in its budget. However, the schools in which it operated had their own ideas. Not only were the principals determined to maintain the project coordinator to help their students and families but so were the teachers and staff members, as a vote of the personnel at each school indicated. As a result, the site's two school principals chose to use discretionary funds to develop a new position, that of parent educator, for which the coordinator was well qualified and which tied in with a major aspect of the SoF. In that position, not funded by the district but by the participating schools themselves, the coordinator is doing double duty in year six, devoting considerable time to parent contacts and support while also continuing in the role, if not the name, of project coordinator for the School of the Future.

* Ellmer, R. and Lein, L. (1993) Qualitative Evaluation: School of the Future Final Report. Unpublished report.

** Comer, J. P. (1980) School Power: Implications of an Intervention Project. New York: The Free Press.

Additional School of the Future publications:

A Community Catalyst - Austin
A Blueprint for School-Based Services - Dallas
The Health Clinic - Houston
Parent Volunteer Program - San Antonio

Single copies of the booklets listed are available without charge from the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, P.O. Box 7998, Austin, TX 78713. For multiple copies, contact the Director, School of the Future Project.

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